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TEACHERS' EXTENSION SCHOOLS

G. A. BRICKER
Ohio State University

New facilities for extension teaching have been made possible since the appearance of Bulletin No. 3, 1911, of the United States Bureau of Education, by Professor William Carl Ruediger, entitled, *Agencies for the Improvement of Teachers in Service*. This new aid comes to all states alike from the federal government. Conditions were ripe in Ohio for making immediate use of this new aid, and the way in which it was used is set forth in the following paragraphs.

The "Nelson Amendment" (34 Stat. L. 1381), approved March 4, 1907, and effective for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1908, provided for increasing, at the rate of five thousand dollars a year for five years, the funds appropriated by the federal government to the several states and territories for the support of the colleges of agriculture. A proviso in this act makes it permissible for the land-grant colleges to devote a part of this twenty-five-thousand-dollar increase "for providing courses for the special preparation of instructors for teaching the elements of agriculture and the mechanic arts."

Until recently the funds derived from this source were permitted to be used by a land-grant college for the purpose stated on the campus only. On November 2, 1911, the Attorney-General of the United States promulgated the following rulings in reference to the use of the Nelson fund:

No part of the funds received under the provisions of the acts of 1890 and 1907 may be used for any form of extension work, and all instruction must be given at the institutions receiving these funds, except that a reasonable portion of the funds provided by the act of 1907 may be used for the instruction of teachers in agriculture, mechanic arts, and domestic science at summer schools, teachers' institutes, and by correspondence, and in supervising and directing work in these subjects in high schools.

All or a part of the funds provided by the act of March 4, 1907, may be used "for providing courses for the special preparation of instructors for

teaching the elements of agriculture and mechanic arts." It is held that this language authorizes expenditures for instruction in the history of agriculture and industrial education, in methods of teaching agriculture, mechanic arts, and home economics, and also for special aid and supervision given to teachers actively engaged in teaching agriculture, mechanic arts, and home economics in public schools. It does not authorize expenditures for general courses in pedagogy, psychology, history of education, and methods of teaching.¹

In each state, therefore, there exist the financial means for carrying on teachers' extension schools in agricultural education through the initiative of the land-grant colleges, if only the governing bodies of these institutions desire to apply a portion of the Nelson fund for this purpose.

During the present school year a plan for carrying on teachers' extension schools for the training of teachers engaged in active service, in the elements of agriculture and the methods of teaching the same, is being worked out experimentally by the writer under the auspices of the College of Education of the Ohio State University. A school was started at Circleville, Ohio, in connection with the bi-monthly session of the Pickaway County Teachers' Institute, October 28, 1911, for the purpose of instructing the teachers of Pickaway and adjoining counties in the elements and the pedagogy of agriculture. As soon as the rulings of the Attorney-General were made known, money from the Nelson fund was at once applied to help defray the expenses of this school. Doubtless this was the first school of its kind in the United States to use Nelson funds for the training of teachers in service. On January 13 and 20, 1912, similar schools were begun at Mt. Vernon and Van Wert, Ohio.

For the benefit of others who may institute similar plans a brief description of the organization and management of these schools will be given.

The first step is the appointment, by the professor in charge of the teachers' extension school work, of a local leader, known as the Chairman of the Executive Committee, who will work to create sentiment for the proposed school, present the plan to the teachers

¹ See pp. 11, 12, of the United States Bureau of Education bulletin of 1911 entitled *Federal Laws, Regulations, and Rulings Affecting the Land-Grant Colleges of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts*.

in their meetings and elsewhere, and secure from them pledges of attendance. In the meantime brief articles on the nature and purpose of the school are sent out from the University to all the newspapers published in the county where the holding of the proposed school is contemplated. Invitations to become members of the school are also sent to all the teachers of the county. The local leader is furnished with pledge cards upon which to secure the names and addresses of the teachers who pledge attendance. When fifty such pledges are secured, the cards are filed with the College of Education, and the teachers' extension school is granted to the county or community seeking it. The sessions are held in the town most easily accessible to the majority of the teachers—usually the county seat.

A membership fee of twenty-five cents, payable at the first meeting, is required of each member, and the sum thus realized is used by the Executive Committee to defray the local expenses of the school. All other expenses—the salary of the instructor, and his railroad and hotel expenses—are assumed by the University.

The complete organization of the school is affected at the first meeting, at which time the fees are paid and the membership cards issued. Each school requires at least four officers besides the University professor in charge of the school, who exercises general supervision over its educational activities, and the chairman of the Executive Committee. These officers are a secretary, a treasurer, a librarian, and a doorkeeper, who together constitute the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee has general charge of the local business matters of the school.

A Press Committee is also usually appointed by the chairman of the Executive Committee. This committee furnishes brief reports, to the local press concerning the instruction and the progress of the school.

The school is divided into two classes, A and B. This division is made in order to reduce the number of books necessary for one school. There are two sets of books, one set on the teaching of agriculture and the other on the content-matter of agriculture. At the first meeting references in the first set of books are assigned to class A, and references in the second set to class B; at the second

meeting, the sets of books and the references are interchanged. A new assignment of reading is made at the third, and thereafter at each odd-numbered meeting. The members of the school may or may not read the assignments, just as they choose. Experience has shown, however, that in the majority of cases the reading is done. The members are given to understand from the outset, that each individual will derive benefit from the school in the direct ratio of his efforts in the work. Incidentally, the division into classes affords the basis for creating a healthy rivalry between the classes, which may often be used to good advantage.

The equipment of the school is very simple. A room in which to meet regularly must be provided. Large schoolrooms and high-school assembly rooms have been found very satisfactory for this purpose, especially where there are a sufficient number of individual desks upon which the notebooks, the agricultural materials, and the simple apparatus may be placed. The commodious blackboard of the schoolroom will also be a welcome feature. The agricultural materials are brought to the school mostly by the teachers from the farms in their school districts. The simpler apparatus needed is provided by the Executive Committee, while the more expensive apparatus is brought to the school from the University by the instructor. In Ohio the Traveling Library Department of the State Library was especially courteous and helpful in furnishing a selected list of textbooks for reference reading.

The sessions are held on Saturdays, there being two meetings to each session, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. The meetings are usually an hour and a half to two hours long. The sessions may be held on consecutive or on alternate Saturdays, the latter plan being found the better. When the alternate-Saturday plan is used, one instructor may conduct two schools at the same time. These schools in Ohio continue for six sessions, but there is no special reason why they may not continue for a longer period.

The aim is to make the instruction given in these schools so practical and definite that the teachers in attendance may use in their schools during the two intervening weeks the materials and methods given them. That the teachers appreciate the oppor-

tunity thus afforded them will be seen from the fact that the enrolment in the first school, held at Circleville, was sixty-two, and several of the teachers attended the school at a personal expenditure of over five dollars. At Mt. Vernon the enrolment was seventy-two on the first day, the rural teachers braving the severe cold of a morning when the mercury stood 15° below zero. The school at Van Wert enrolled eighty-eight on the first day. The total enrolments of these schools reached one hundred and eight and one hundred and twenty-five respectively.

The teachers' extension school is full of possibilities. By enlarging its scope through the presentation of additional subjects, it might well become a worthy successor of both the teachers' institute and the reading circle. By supplementing the available Nelson fund with the sums spent in carrying on the institute and the reading circle, a teachers' extension school might be carried forward on alternate Saturdays throughout the school year with far greater advantage and benefit to the teachers concerned. Again, it would be possible to reach the children in the public schools more effectively with authentic information and approved methods of teaching. Through a school of this kind, attended regularly by fifty teachers, each of whom had twenty pupils, it would be possible to reach one thousand children immediately, directly, and efficiently. The surprising thing is that this method of preparing teachers who are in active service was not long ago instituted. It is to be sincerely hoped that more help from this source may be expected in future years.